
Position Statement On the Education of Students with Disabilities

Adopted January 3, 2001

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that all students are unique and are influenced by cultural, linguistic, intellectual, psychological, medical, social and economic factors. These factors create a need for a varied educational environment that provides for, and accommodates, each child's strengths and areas of needed improvement. The Board also believes that a unified and coordinated continuum of educational opportunities and supports, designed to address individual needs, serves and benefits all students. The Board encourages the implementation of educational models that promote multiple instructional strategies which encourage and accommodate students in the general environment to the maximum extent appropriate. It is the responsibility and obligation of educators to design and provide teaching strategies, methods and materials that are suitable for each individual learner. As appropriate, a continuum of these strategies should be implemented before a child is referred to special education.

The Connecticut State Board of Education supports the principle that *Connecticut's Common Core of Learning* defines common goals for all students, including those with disabilities. Connecticut's public education system has the duty to provide opportunities for all students to achieve the statewide student goals (motivation to learn, mastery of the basic skills, acquisition of knowledge, competence in life skills and understanding society's values). The demonstrated performance of these skills, knowledge and attributes must become a greater focus and the acknowledged responsibility of all professionals in the education community. The Board presumes that these goals are best achieved in the child's local school, although it recognizes that some children who present significant and/or unique needs require placement in alternate settings to achieve those goals. Furthermore, the Board believes in the continuous monitoring of student growth and achievement.

Good practice requires that school districts:

- 1) Deliver support services based on early diagnosis of learning problems and early intervention strategies that accommodate different learning styles in the regular classroom, which results in fewer students unnecessarily being identified as requiring special education;
- 2) Align special education programs and services with all state, federal and local reform efforts to ensure involvement in all school improvement activities;

(continued)

- 3) Support full participation in state and district wide assessment activities designed to assess the degree to which basic skills are mastered;
- 4) Use current medical, educational and psychological research to inform best practices in teaching strategies;
- 5) Identify and support activities that will enhance and promote a school climate that is conducive to positive development for all children, including children with disabilities;
- 6) Provide training to all educators that prepares them to teach children with varying abilities, interests and learning styles, and that enables them to, with the use of supplementary aids and services, modify curriculum, deliver individually designed instruction and implement effective instructional practices in the least restrictive environment;
- 7) Identify and support actions necessary to promote the appropriate and positive involvement of students with disabilities in the total school program, including extracurricular activities;
- 8) Provide sufficient allocation and efficient use of resources to provide quality instruction that results in improved student outcomes and focuses on activities with clear educational benefit;
- 9) Involve parents of students with disabilities in planning and assessing all aspects of the student's educational program;
- 10) Develop a collaborative approach to service delivery that includes parental involvement, use of community-based resources, learning experiences that are school-based and community-based, and pupil services and supports (psychology, guidance, counseling, social work, speech and language and health services);
- 11) Provide a continuum of teaching and learning options and settings that foster high expectations, continuing improvement and challenging curriculum for all students, and that prepare students for eventual entry into higher education and the workplace; and
- 12) Identify student needs and the implementation of student and teacher accountability measures to assess growth and the impact of services.

The Board believes that implementation of these practices will encourage all students to value themselves as capable individuals who make successful transitions to further education and employment. As a result, students will be self-sufficient, productive and contributing members of society, able to make informed personal choices and function successfully as family members, workers, learners, citizens, friends and consumers.